



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 February 2020 by C Brennan BAE (Hons) M.PLAN

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/19/3240522

81 Westcombe Park Road, Blackheath SE3 7QS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr B Bahra against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref 19/2102/HD, dated 10 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2019.
 - The proposed development is construction of a 2.4m basement and the incorporation of a lightwell to the front of the premises.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, which includes the Westcombe Park Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site comprises a two-storey, semi-detached dwellinghouse on the northern side of Westcombe Park Road, a short distance to the west of the junction with Mycenae Road. The appeal property includes a front porch and a prominent two-storey bay feature at the front elevation, which are typical characteristics of properties within the surrounding area. The site is situated within the Westcombe Park Conservation Area, whose significance is largely derived from the architectural merit and consistency of its buildings.
 5. The proposed front lightwell would extend across the bay feature, with a depth that would be about twice that of the front porch. Due to its prominent size and positioning, the proposed lightwell would be readily visible from the street. As the surrounding streetscene is not characterised by such front lightwells, the proposal would have an overt, incongruous appearance that would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the appeal property and surrounding area. The proposal would therefore detract from the architectural cohesion of the surrounding area, which is mentioned in the Westcombe Park
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Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2010) as a feature which contributes to the significance of the Conservation Area.

6. The appellant has drawn my attention to Mycenae House, a large building located to the north of the appeal site which features a large lightwell. However, this property is well set back from the road and is in use as a community centre, incorporating a variety of functions such as office space and a restaurant. Due to its use, scale and siting, Mycenae House is not directly comparable to the appeal property and does not provide a justifiable precedent.
7. The appellant has also drawn my attention to 109 Mycenae Road, a three-storey block of residential flats with additional accommodation at both basement and roof levels. Due to its contemporary design and scale, as well as its location with a distinctly different streetscene, this property is not comparable to the proposal nor does it provide a precedent which would justify the appeal scheme.
8. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, which includes the Westcombe Park Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan (2016) and Policies DH1 and DH(a) of the Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014), which require that development should have regard to the form of an area, be designed to the highest standard and be appropriate to the building and locality. There would also be conflict with Policy 7.8 of the London Plan and Policies DH3 and DH(h) of the Core Strategy with Detailed Policies which state that development should protect and enhance heritage assets and respect the setting of Conservation Areas, have regard to the character of an area, and the Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (2018), which states that proposals for lightwells will normally be refused where they are not a traditional feature of the street.
9. The proposal would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), which states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset's significance from the impacts of a proposed development.
10. The proposal would also conflict with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
11. The harm that the proposed development would cause to the significance of the Westcombe Park Conservation Area would be less than substantial, as the proposed front lightwell would only be seen along a small part of the Conservation Area. However, there would be no public benefits that would outweigh that harm.

Other Matters

12. The appellant states that the proposal would provide improved living conditions for the occupants of the appeal property. While this might be the case, the identified harm that would result from the proposal would clearly outweigh this benefit.

Conclusion and Recommendation

13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Brennan

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR